



# The Caribbean Seabird Initiative: Invasives

May 2011

CSI: Invasives is a project that seeks to increase regional capacity, support, and funding for invasive species work to benefit seabirds in the Caribbean region.

## Funds Awarded for Rat Eradication on Dog Island, Anguilla

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The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has committed US\$205,000 from its Seabirds Keystone Initiative to a rat eradication project on Dog Island, Anguilla. The grantee, Fauna & Flora International (FFI), and partners including the Anguilla National Trust, Anguilla Department of Environment, and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, are committed to at least US\$238,000 in matched funds and in-kind support. Dog Island is an uninhabited, 201-hectare low rocky island 13 km northwest of Anguilla. It is one of the Caribbean's most important seabird islands, with nine breeding species including globally and regionally significant populations of Sooty Terns (113,000 pairs), Brown Boobies (>1,200 pairs), Laughing Gulls, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Brown Noddies, Masked Boobies, and Red-billed Tropicbirds. Dog Island is equally significant for Hawksbill, Leatherback and Green Turtles, and endemic terrestrial reptiles. While impressive, the seabird colonies are probably less than a quarter of their former size, and reptile populations are also suppressed because of the abundance of alien invasive black rats and feral goats on the island. Decades of occupation by these introduced mammals have degraded and modified Dog Island's landscape and food-web, suppressing the regeneration of native flora, driving the process of desertification, and preying on eggs, chicks and small animals. Project partners have been working closely with the private landowner to chart out a long-term vision to restore and sustain the island's biodiversity. A rat eradication feasibility study was conducted in 2007, and the promise of implementation thanks to this award is an exciting prospect for all concerned. Contact Jenny Daltry, [jenny.daltry@fauna-flora.org](mailto:jenny.daltry@fauna-flora.org) or Farah Mukhida, Anguilla National Trust, [antpam@anguillanet.com](mailto:antpam@anguillanet.com).



Dog Island's Brown Boobies and other wildlife will benefit from eradication of black rats.

## Seabird Workshop Planned for SCSCB

A special one-day workshop on seabird conservation, monitoring and management is under development for July 26, the day after the close of the 18th Regional Meeting of the Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds (SCSCB), 21 - 25 July 2011, Freeport, Grand Bahama. Visit <https://sites.google.com/site/scscbmeeting2011/home> to learn more details about the workshop and the regional meeting. Contact Ann Haynes-Sutton, SCSCB, [asutton@cwjamaica.com](mailto:asutton@cwjamaica.com), 876 877 7335.

## Antigua's Seabird Populations Flourish After Rat Eradications

Now celebrating its 15th anniversary, the Offshore Islands Conservation Programme has removed *Rattus rattus* from eleven islands off Northeast Antigua. Initially focused on saving a rare, endemic snake, the project has increased the Antiguan racer population ten-fold, through actions including predator eradication, careful reintroductions, site stewardship and public education. The project has also benefitted other island biodiversity including seabirds. A comparative study of 23 Antigua islands in 2010 found significantly higher density and diversity of seabirds on rat-free islands versus rat-infested islands; additionally, the numbers of most bird species increased sharply by more than 10-fold after rats were removed. Study leaders presented the results of some of this work at the Island Biodiversity symposium in Martinique, November 2010, and intend to publish findings. Contact: Jenny Daltry, FFI, [jenny.daltry@fauna-flora.org](mailto:jenny.daltry@fauna-flora.org) or Natalya Lawrence, Environmental Awareness Group, [eag@candw.ag](mailto:eag@candw.ag).

## Workshop on Evaluation, Control and Eradication of Invasive Species on Islands Held in the Dominican Republic

The environmental problems related to invasive species and the skills needed to address these problems were the focus of a recent workshop collaboratively conducted by the Dominican Republic's Environment Ministry, TNC Central Caribbean Program, and Grupo de Ecología y Conservación de Islas (GECI, of México) for local conservation managers, NGO personnel and government officials in the Dominican Republic. The workshop, which took place in Santo Domingo from January 31 to February 11, 2011, was held in conjunction with a Symposium on Invasive Species at the Congress of Caribbean Biodiversity, and attended by 28 conservation managers and field biologists. Small islands surrounding the Dominican Republic have a very valuable biodiversity, including several endemic species, which is threatened by introduced invasive mammals, including, rats, feral cats, cows and donkeys. The workshop was conducted based on the belief that building local capacity is a critical step towards restoration through eradication and long-term stewardship through biosecurity. Preliminary field assessments to Cabrito Island and Catalina Island were conducted as part of the workshop. As for the future, the involved parties are considering the signing of a general collaboration agreement that could be useful for both, capacity building and conservation actions in the field. Contact Dr. Alfonso Aguirre Muñoz, GECI, [alfonso.aguirre@islas.org.mx](mailto:alfonso.aguirre@islas.org.mx), 52 646 173 4943.



*Dominican Republic conservation managers and field biologists, with instructors from GECI, at a capacity-building workshop for addressing the threats of invasive species to island biodiversity.*

## Island Conservation Hires Caribbean Regional Director

Island Conservation (IC) has recently hired a Caribbean Regional Director, Boris Fabres, from Trinidad and Tobago. Boris will be leading the organization's efforts to identify island restoration opportunities in the Caribbean and working with partners to facilitate these restoration actions. Boris will begin working at the main IC office in California, and will relocate to establish a regional office once the decision is made where to locate that office. Additionally, IC has positioned a staff member in Puerto Rico, at the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge Complex offices in Cabo Rojo, to manage projects in Puerto Rico and to help develop other opportunities that are evolving in the region. Contact Brad Keitt, Island Conservation, [brad.keitt@islandconservation.org](mailto:brad.keitt@islandconservation.org), 831 359 4787.

## Some Positive Outcomes of the Gulf Oil Spill

### Projects Funded with Recovered Oil Fund

One year ago, the region's attention was focused on the unfolding drama of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Fortunately, due to the movement of currents, the oil does not appear to have been transported out of the Gulf of Mexico. However, Caribbean seabirds had potential for exposure while migrating or foraging in the spill area. Based on these concerns, partners sought and secured funds from the Recovered Oil Fund for Wildlife (administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) to undertake projects to mitigate negative effects, including eradication of invasive species on islands. Visit [www.nfwf.org/gulfresponse2011](http://www.nfwf.org/gulfresponse2011).

### New Information from Cay Sal Bank

Concerns about Deepwater Horizon oil migrating into the Caribbean also resulted in action by the Government of The Bahamas and the Bahamas National Trust to organize three expeditions to the westernmost Bahamas islands on remote Cay Sal Bank, in the summer of 2010. Many scientists and naturalists with expertise in the Bahamas volunteered to collect baseline information on wildlife present in the water and on land. The seabird communities were found to be healthy and large with no signs of immediate impact from the oil. Geolocators were placed on six Audubon's Shearwaters to document their movement patterns over the next year and whether they were using the Gulf of Mexico for foraging. Sediment and tissue samples from fish were also collected and stored to enable detection of future contamination if it occurs. Thousands of pairs of Audubon's Shearwaters, Bridled Terns, Sooty Terns, and Brown Noddies were confirmed on the cays, significant numbers of Brown Boobies, Sandwich Terns, Royal Terns, and Least Terns were nesting as well, and most of the islands show no signs of invasive mammals. Cay Sal Cay itself formally had a Defense Force base, and marines who spent months on the cay reported that rats were present, but none were detected in a limited number of traps that were deployed. Elbow Cay, where a lighthouse was operating for decades, hosted thousands of seabirds packed throughout the island, and also no sign of invasive mammals. Contact Will Mackin, West Indian Seabirds, [willmackin@gmail.com](mailto:willmackin@gmail.com), 919 491 6127 or Eric Carey, Bahamas National Trust, [ecarey@bnt.bs](mailto:ecarey@bnt.bs), 242 393 1317.



*Recent observations at Cay Sal Bank revealed that it hosts some of the largest and most remote seabird breeding sites remaining in the Caribbean, thus highlighting the need to regularly visit the bank to monitor populations and the state of biosecurity.*

## FORUMS AND WEBSITES

### CaribbeanHub

A new Caribbean Conservation Networking project launched earlier this year, [www.CaribbeanHub.net](http://www.CaribbeanHub.net), facilitates professional communities with an interest in combating invasive species, climate change and preserving biodiversity in the Caribbean. The Hub arose from a call for action from attendees at the meeting "Helping Islands Adapt: A Workshop on Regional Action to Combat Invasive Species on Islands to Preserve Biodiversity and Adapt to Climate Change," (12-16 April 2010, Auckland, New Zealand). Seed funding for the establishment of the Hub was contributed by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in June 2010, along with ongoing support from the Cayman Islands Department of Environment. The long term objective of the Hub is to bring together ideas, people, projects, experience, expertise, funds and common resources. The Caribbean Hub is currently in its early stages, however it is envisaged that, as the Community grows, the direction and content of the Caribbean Hub will develop in accordance with the needs of the Community. Feedback, suggestions and requests are welcome. Contact Dr. Mat Cottam, Cayman Islands Department of Environment, [Mat.Cottam@gov.ky](mailto:Mat.Cottam@gov.ky), 1-345-949-8469.

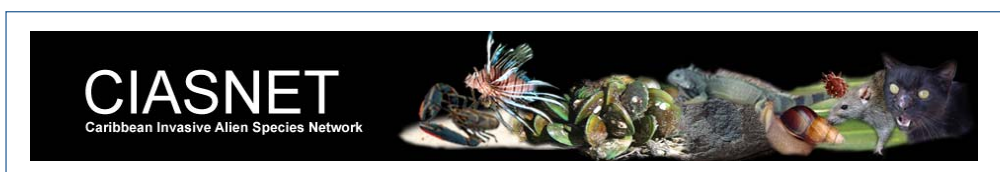


*The CaribbeanHub site offers:*

- *A discussion forum*
- *Organizational profiles*
- *Repository for links to local and regional list servers*
- *News and notices*
- *Job opportunities*
- *Publications*
- *Project support*

### CIASNET

The Caribbean Invasive Alien Species Network website, [www.CIASNET.org](http://www.CIASNET.org), was launched last fall to provide a one-stop shop for information on invasive species in the Wider Caribbean, which are threatening native and endemic biodiversity. The site documents key actions and results, giving details on a range of invasive alien species of importance to the Caribbean, highlights people and organisations that are pioneering the work. The site is the culmination of the efforts of many scientists and organisations such as USDA/APHIS, CARICOM; United Nations Environment Programme, Centre for Agriculture and Bio-Sciences International (CABI), and the Caribbean Invasive Species Working Group (CISWIG). For more information, visit the site at <http://www.ciasnet.org/ciasnet-org/contact-us/>.



Find this newsletter posted at <http://wicbirds.net>



CSI: Invasives is an initiative of Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, a partnership with the vision that the distribution, diversity and abundance of populations and habitats of breeding, migratory and non-breeding waterbirds are sustained or restored throughout the lands and waters of the Americas.  
[www.waterbirdconservation.org](http://www.waterbirdconservation.org)